

Proceedings No. 6
The Wrekin Forest Partnership
Monday 1st June 2009
Closed Session
Buckatree Hall Hotel 7pm – 9pm

Chair - Michael Mander DL / Phil Holden SHAONB

Attendees:

Michael Mander DL [MM] ; Phil Holden, Manager Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership[PH]; Pat Hutchings, Chair Little Wenlock PC [PAH; Chris Mead, Chair Buildwas PC[CM]; Rt. Hon Harry Vane, Raby Estate [HV]; Cllr. Jacqui Seymour, TWC [JS] ; George Evans, AFRTW[GE]; Mike and Jackie White, Wellington Civic Society [MW/JW]; Pete Lambert, Shropshire Wildlife Trust [PWL]

Apologies:

Colin Preston, Director Shropshire Wildlife Trust; Trevor Parkin, ENTEC ecological consultants, Craig Ball UK Coal; Dr Andy Wigley, Shropshire Council, Dorothy Roberts, Wellington Town Council; Julia Owen, Leasowes Farm; and Jane Bushell, Landscape Architect TWC.

Agenda

1. Matters arising

- a. Thank you letter to Wrekin Forest volunteers very well received. MM had a number of replies thanking him for recognising the invaluable work of the volunteer group over the last three years. GE was thanked for suggesting the note of gratitude be made in the first place.
- b. Concern noted by MM regarding feedback on Wrekin Forest Visitor strategy see main agenda item below.
- c. No action taken in regard to website

Action - PH/PWL to follow up

- d. Deer impact project – PWL explained that a project proposal had been drafted but SWT not in position currently to provide match funding for a bid. Further discussions with Raby Estate, confirmed by HV had made it clear that more consideration needed to be given to the design and intention of a deer related project. PWL had met with the Deer Initiative officer Greg Jones to discuss the Wrekin Forest and it's deer. At present plans to seek further funding are on hold until it is clear exactly what a deer related project would aim to achieve.
- e. A litter pick was held on 20th March jointly between PAH and the Wrekin Forest Volunteers. Veolia staff from the Candles Landfill site removed all the bags.

Action - PAH to formally thank Veolia at next Candles Liaison meeting.

- f. Veolia Environmental Fund – discussion ongoing with Julia Owen and SWT – PWL

Action – PWL to report back at next WFP meet.

- g. Feedback on Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund access works in the Ercall and in and around the Forest Glen. Consensus agreement that new entrance was positive enhancement of the approach to the Hill. PWL said that Fund administrators were very pleased with the project in particular the high level of volunteers involvement.
Action – PWL would welcome project proposals for the next round of ALSF applications.

2. Chair arrangements

MM stated that due to personal considerations that he would like to stand down as WFP chair with immediate effect. MM felt his initial task of steering the Partnership through its first two tricky years was done. The members universally expressed their gratitude to MM. Under the Terms of Reference of the WFP there is no formal procedure to selecting a chair and was left at the discretion of the members. PH was nominated to take over as Chair, proposed by GE and seconded by PAH. It was suggested that MM could still support WFP by becoming President. Proposed by PAH and seconded by PWL.

Action – PWL to write to MM to express gratitude of Partnership for his key role in establishing the group.

3. Huntington Lane SMS Public Enquiry – Discussion

GE, PAH spoke of their participation on the Public Enquiry. The Public enquiry is due to finish on Thursday 4th June. The final decision from the inspector is not expected for another 6 wks. The final ruling from the Secretary of State may be made possibly as late as 2010. PAH reported on some of the planning conditions Little Wenlock PC had proposed, GE outlined the across the board objection to the proposal including cross party support from local MPs and Cllrs for the objection. The most recent sessions had focussed on the restoration plan, local examples have led to a pessimistic feeling about fluid timetables amongst local residents.

Of note was the TWC Cabinet paper from 11th May in which the Wrekin Forest landscape plan as part of the broader Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan was put forward to be adopted by TWC as part of their statutory response to AONB designation.

The full document can be found on TWC website at

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/demservices/agenda.asp?reference=693>

4. Wrekin Forest feasibility study – feedback from TWC

Unfortunately the TWC and Buckatree Hall Hotel responses to the Wrekin Forest Visitor feasibility study were not forthcoming in time for the meeting. See extract below from previous minutes WFP meeting No. 5 held on Monday 23rd February 2009 in particular b, c, d, and e.

- a. Visitor centre considered uneconomic and inappropriate development for the Wrekin Forest- general agreement with this finding.
- b. **Walkers café development at Buckatree Hotel- this element was looked upon favourably, unfortunately the Hotel management were not available to comment on the work they have done in this respect.**

- c. Toilet block – the study recommended the old toilet block should be demolished, there was disagreement with this finding. Cllr Stephen Bentley offered to look again at the situation regarding the closed building and will be reporting back at the next Wrekin Forest partnership meeting.
- d. Car park – the study proposes that the Orleton Trust offer to lease land to help remodel the parking arrangements should be accepted on the basis of the unsatisfactory nature of the current layout. There was a mixed response to this element Cllr Stephen Bentley echoing the recent offer by TWC officers, has offered to explore the options surrounding car parking and report back to the Partnership in due course.
- e. Quiet lanes – general agreement that traffic calming measures would be welcomed throughout the Wrekin Forest. Little Wenlock PC has already initiated work in this respect and recent discussion with TWC also indicated support to look at possible solutions to traffic concerns.

JS informed the chair that Cllr Stephen Bentley had not received notification of the WFP meeting.

Action - JS/PWL to follow up

5. Wrekin Hillfort restoration project update

PWL and HV gave an update on the work so far. Care was being taken to keep the visiting public informed of the works that were underway on the Hillfort. Next task day on Wednesday 10th June involving Lawley primary school, Wrekin Forest and Wrekin Hillfort volunteers. A press release has been issued to explain nature of restoration work and attract further public involvement in the ongoing restoration plan.

6. Mountain Biking feedback from Public meeting 23rd March 2009.

PWL reported that a well attended and balanced meeting had been held to try to identify the issues which have arisen from the increased use of the Wrekin Forest by mountain bikers.

In simple terms the Wrekin Forest is unrivalled locally in the challenges and thrills offered to all styles and ages of off road cyclist. The bikers themselves recognise the health and safety issues and are very keen to work with local land owners to address and work to resolve areas of difficulty. The meeting concluded with a summary that set out two areas of focus, separated by fundamental differences in ownership – 1. The Ercall owned by TWC local authority and SWT, and 2. The Wrekin in private ownership. A third area can also be identified that of the whole Wrekin Forest.

SWT and TWC are in ongoing discussion regarding the Ercall. The future resolution of user conflict on the Wrekin Hill seemed to hinge on liability and other seemingly intractable concerns.

Action – PWL with TWC officers to facilitate site visit on Ercall later in the Summer.

7. Shropshire Hills AONB update Phil Holden

- a. PH outlined implication of new Unitary Authority Shropshire Council. b. LEADER funding to become available shortly, PWL requested exposition of criteria and eligibility when possible. C. New SHAONB woodland project to commence in Autumn. D. NE Climate change paper recently issued. E. Long Mynd and Stiperstones Shuttle bus timetable distributed F. Sustainable Business Directory has now been published.

8. AOB –

A. Ercall LNR experiencing continued rise in wild camping problems, HV said Raby also encountered problems in the Estate woodlands.

B. TWC Rural Forum PH asked if WFP had representative on the Forum PAH said she would probably attend as did JS.

Next meeting 21st September 2009 7 -9pm

Venue to be confirmed

Meeting closed 9pm.

Apologies and Agenda please contact:
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